



Photo: Chuck Wainwright

Living in Two Worlds

BY CHERIE YURCO

Actor Paul Adelstein Shares All the Details of His Musical Side

Many people have taken note of actor Paul Adelstein, 42, who plays the handsome pediatrician, Dr. Cooper Freedman, on ABC's *Private Practice*, and now they are just becoming aware of his alter ego as a pianist, guitarist, and singer who recently released the album *All the Details*. It's his third album as singer/songwriter for the band Doris, which he started in Chicago in the late '90s.

The name Doris comes from Adelstein's mom. Originally, band members offered up the suggestion as a joke, then Adelstein thought, "Why not?" and the name stuck.

Since the band's inception he's moved to Los Angeles, where he took on new bandmates, though some of the original Doris members flew out to be part of the recording session for *All the Details*.

Adelstein first became interested in music as a youngster in Chicago. "I didn't have much aptitude for reading music, but I loved to play," says the actor, who began piano lessons at age 10.

His mother had a huge collection of classical music and his father was into jazz, but it was his older brother and sister who introduced him to bands like

The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, and REM. "I remember listening to the *Talking Heads*: 77 with my sister when it came out; I was seven," recalls Adelstein. "That had a huge influence on me, along with Squeeze, REM, Elvis Costello, and more classic rock stuff, Bowie, and The Beatles."

Eventually, he learned a few blues scales and how to figure out a tune, and by the end of high school, he was crafting his own songs on the piano, and had also taught himself guitar.

Adelstein graduated from Bowdoin College with a degree in English and minor in music. In the summer between his junior and senior years, he joined New Crime Productions theater company founded by John Cusack, and also started a band. That's when Adelstein says he



Photo: ABC/Colleen Hayes

Paul Adelstein with co-stars KaDee Strickland and Griffin Gluck on set.

knew he would always play music.

"From that moment it was pretty much laid out what I would do with my life," he says. "It was exciting because, after growing up and being so passionate about those things [theater and music], I didn't really see a possibility of making a life in those worlds. Then, after being exposed to some working actors and musicians, all of a sudden, I saw that it was a possibility, and I was off to the races."

Adelstein originally had his doubts about being able to follow both paths. "I was told, while I was growing up, that it would be wise to make a choice between one thing or the other, and that's something that tortured me for a long time," he explains, adding that he's since realized how complementary the dual careers are. "Anything that stimu-

Making Music caught up with actor/musician Paul Adelstein at the bar Jake's Dilemma in New York City's Upper Westside.



Photos: Chuck Wainwright

lates your imagination is going to feed into anything else that stimulates your imagination.”

“I’ve always had both things running through my head,” he adds. “As an actor it’s interpretive—you are performing someone else’s words, so the kind of musician I am [as a songwriter] is maybe one step more intimate, but I really love both.”

“I’ve learned lessons both in acting and in music that apply to each one,” he continues. “I think they’ve both helped me to grow.” For example, he says, music has taught him “to listen and be patient, to keep trying ... and that it’s okay to suck sometimes!”

Like many musicians, both recreational and professional, music is a sort of escape from the norms of a full-time career. “I really benefit from being able to turn one thing off and doing another thing—switching gears,” he says. “For me there’s a huge amount of joy in making music.”

“Still, there’s not enough hours in a day,” he laments, when asked how he has time for it all. “I have a guitar in my trailer at all times and I play music every night when I get home.” He’s also set up a recording studio in his home that allows him to record in the evening, on weekends, and whenever he has a day off.

With melodies always running through his mind, Adelstein often thinks of music while acting. “In *Private Practice* there are a lot of needle drops, and so you can kind of imagine what type of song is going to be potentially playing,” he says.

He’s even tested the movie scoring waters a bit. His song “All You Need” was used as source music for a bar scene in the film *Burn After Reading*, and he wrote an original song for the short Pat Healy HBO film *Mullitt*. “It was fun to stretch out that way,” he says.

The new CD, *All the Details*, combines piano driven melodies with snappy, fun lyrics. It’s clear that Adelstein enjoys the process of songwriting. He admits to a variety of influences on the album, from Randy Newman and Harry Nilsson to The Beatles and Elvis Costello, but he’s come into his own as a songwriter.

“There are some themes or ideas of disappointment, ambition, and how people treat each other in certain situations,” he says. “Each song can stand on its own though I definitely tried to make a cohesive record.”

“As I got deeper into songwriting, I became obsessed with crafting the perfect three-minute song,” says Adelstein. “So while I listen to Van Morrison, and everybody from Etta James to Joe Cocker, the songwriting part of it became so important to me that I gravitated to people like Leonard Cohen, Townes Van Zandt, and Randy Newman ... people who crafted the three-minute gems that I’m in constant pursuit of.”

Adelstein says that inspiration for these “story songs that are strong on melody” can come from almost anywhere. “I found what works best is to come up with a figure, or a couple phrases,

“I’ve learned lessons both in acting and in music that apply to each one... I think they’ve both helped me to grow.”

whether it’s a verse, chorus, or even a bridge, and then, without really knowing where it comes from, I build out,” he explains. “When I have a specific idea about what a song should be about, or what it should be like, before I start writing it, it ends up being forced and kind of pedantic.”

When putting together an LP there’s always the challenge to arrive at the right mix of tunes, and sometimes that means exploring different approaches. “I’m most proud of ‘The Sing Along’ because I found it was different; it was a very still song for me,” explains Adelstein. “I used to throw as many chords into a song as I could jam in there, and I’m learning to be patient, so I am proud of how that one turned out!”

Another song that is quirky and quite catchy, is the lead song “Ladybug Luck.” “It was almost a novelty, and a couple different people said that it needs a full band, but I didn’t buy it,” he says. “When we recorded it, it was quick and easy, and I think that’s always a good sign for a song. I love how it turned out.”

The fun tune, rich in symbolism, was a favorite among friends, and that’s how it ended up as a music video featuring scenes from the 1971 motorcycle flick *On Any Sunday*. “My friend Kyle Davison, who’s this great video director in Canada, wanted a crack at the song, and then he had an inspiration one night when he saw that movie on late-night television,” says Adelstein, explaining how the video came about. “I was dubious, and kind of blown away with how it works. It’s totally charming!” You can watch the video at DorisMusic.net.

Though very lyric-driven, Adelstein leaves the final interpretation of his songs open to listeners. “My favorite songs are the songs that seem super specific, but if you asked three different people to fill in the blanks, they would probably say three different things. I think that the music and how the song works is the most important part and that communicates its own thing to people.”

Overall, Adelstein is content with the resulting CD and the songs he describes as “sad songs with a snappy beat.” “I’m very proud of the playing and production,” says Adelstein. “We’ve got some great musicians and great performances, and it’s definitely a band at work bringing these songs to life.”

Heading out on tour with Doris this spring, Adelstein jokes that his wildest dreams are for “world domination” and “rabid, cultish fans,” but he admits he really just wants a “listening audience, paying attention to every moment.”

Are you ready to take your violin playing to the next level?

Introducing the **VIOLIN PACKAGE** by VIRTUAL SHEET MUSIC®

Regular price: \$299

Now \$199 Free Shipping

(only \$99 if you are a VSM Member!)

<http://www.virtualsheetmusic.com/pk1>

Designed mostly for violin beginners and violin teachers, it includes over 30 GB of high quality pure digital sheet music, MIDI, Mp3 audio files, and exclusive Mp3 accompaniment files as well as the top rated “Basics of Violin Playing” book... and much more!

“When you deal with Ohana you’ll always find people with a high grade of humanity. That’s why Ohana is my favorite ukulele brand. My Ohana TK 35G is just an amazing instrument, and remains one of my favorites even though I now own 12 ukuleles!” — LORENZO V.



www.ohanaukuleles.com

Lorenzo is one charismatic fellow on his Ohana CK-75CG. Just look, he’s even managed to tame some kangaroos!

Ohana Ukuleles

HAND-CRAFTED FROM QUALITY TONE WOODS

PRICES RANGE FROM \$79 TO \$859.

526.986.6050